

# **MULTIPLICITY IN STRUGGLE: CERAMIC SCULPTURES**

**By**

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## CERTIFICATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MFA (CERAMICS) and that to the best of my knowledge, it contains no materials previously published by another person nor materials which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## ABSTRACT

This project in artistic renditions captures the philosophies nature offers to mankind through the movement and behaviour of ants and uses it to create pieces suitable for explaining philosophies. Bringing diversity in design concepts from the environment and breaking monotony in the function of forms became a target of the project. This project adapted basic studio forming techniques in producing three large ceramic sculptures using slabs and throwing methods. Three works were produced titled Struggle for Food, Struggle for Wealth and Struggle for Knowledge. The artist's analysis and evaluations shows that the aesthetic appeals of the sculptural pieces produced coupled with the concepts developed, promote meaningful responses to them. It also showcases multisectional arrangements of pieces using simple mechanisms of firing in smaller kilns as opposed to the size of the art work. The diversity in the development of philosophical forms in the production of ceramic pieces elude the monotony surrounding its existence and attracts enormous interests from viewers. The multi-sectional approach makes the works efficient in maintaining higher quality standards and in providing diversity in building large pieces. It is evident in this work, that the environment can provide enormous inspiration far above what have commonly been utilized by the artist into developing ideas and concepts for ceramics productions.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The study and the usage of ceramics have undoubtedly been an important aspect of art to the socio-economic development of people and one of the most ancient in the history of art. Ceramics is one of the oldest art forms known to man. It is believed that the art of ceramics was first discovered around the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C in the Middle East (Digolo, et al 1988). The original function of ceramics was to protect seed corn against dampness, mould and pests (Reid, 1997). It developed over the ages and served different purposes. Ceramics functioned as a primary way of disseminating information and cultural ideas. The Moche of ancient Peru made ceramic vessels that depicted and re-created the plethora of objects: fruits, plants, animals, human portraits, gods, demons as well as graphic depiction of sexual acts (Divers, 1933).

Ceramics has developed beyond just utilitarian purposes; African ceramists especially think beyond just functions of a piece and also focus on the idea and philosophy behind their productions. Harnetty (2009) states that the meaning of function in relation to handmade ceramics goes well beyond mere utilitarianism. The writer opines that those of us who make handmade functional ceramics do so not simply to produce objects that enable people to perform various tasks and that explains that we put the thought, time and care into making useful objects with the hope that the users will somehow connect with them beyond their intended purpose.

One field that knocks at the door and beckons to play active part in art and for that matter ceramics is philosophy but this subject has been a sensitive and difficulty area for artist and lovers of art especially its relation to aesthetics. Artists over the years have

identified the difficulty in bringing what is supposed to be the two main makers of art (aesthetics and philosophy) together. Some argue that they are two separate fields that need different attentions. Aesthetics and philosophy have been the centre of debate for a long time and it is likely that the debates about the nature of their relationship, their relative importance and limitations will never end. The marriage as such may be saved simply because the two partners need each other too much, but are they ever going to be happy? This is a question posed by Steinbauer (2006)

American philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto acknowledges an interesting set of ideas about art, its context and its relation to philosophy. The writer wrote that what makes something a work of art is not to be found by looking at its obvious properties. Danto believes that what “makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is.” A ceramic pot found in a museum will obviously not be perceived as being the same as that of a ceramic pot at the market. The reason stemming from the fact that the pot found at museum has an underlining secret (the philosophy), that makes it find its way to the museum. This prompts the ceramist to lay more emphasis and plunge much into philosophy behind wares that are produced.

It would be agreed to some extent that in creativity, the aesthetics as well as the philosophy of an artwork is of paramount importance to the artist. Davies (2007) in the book *Philosophical Perspectives on Art* wrote that what makes something art, whether in Africa or the United States, is an “atmosphere of theory” not properties perceptible to someone ignorant of the conceptual context. It is of no doubt that the African ceramist assigns much interest in the symbolism and for that matter the philosophical purpose of the product than the aesthetics. It has therefore become important for modern ceramist



to lay more emphasis on philosophical works. This would enable the audience to think beyond just the art work. Works that will generate thought and discussions among people that intend to solve problems should therefore be a welcoming era for the arts today.

The study therefore explores what natural creatures specifically ants present to the artist as a resource for art production. It is targeted to delve into the behaviours of ants, examine their movement relationship as an artistic philosophy worthy of translation into an aesthetic ceramic artwork.

## **1.2 Statement of Motivation**

Artist especially the ceramist has variety of sources to draw inspiration from; both man-made and natural sources. Artists over the years have created from the contours of the objects found in the environment such as sea shells, twigs, stones, bones etc. More often than not these forms of inspiration have inherent in them interesting shapes and forms which generally after twists and development produced very fascinating works. It is worthy of note that these objects which are resource for ceramic art design are mostly lifeless. Nortey et al (2013) called for a push beyond the ordinary and not towards a specific aesthetic or approach, but a push towards in-depth exploration, analysis, spontaneous play and association, design development and revision. In this vein, in order to push past conservatism and spur innovations in forms, this study is motivated by how movements of natural creature can offer exemplar for ceramic production.

Ants have been identified as natural creatures that have a lot of life lessons for mankind. The Quran (Sura 27:18) reads “Until, when they came upon the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not." This gives an indication that ants are important

creatures to mankind and therefore mankind does not want them destroyed. The Bible (Proverbs 6:6) says "Take a lesson from the ants you lazybones, learn from their ways and be wise". Both the Quran and the Holy Bible are giving reports of how mankind can learn a great lesson from the ant.

When food, especially sweets is dropped on the floor, there is an interesting and fascinating behaviour of movements of ants toward the food within a short time. No matter how difficult it could be for the ants to travel to where the food is, they travel very fast towards it; even when the food is heavier than their weight, they gather around it and carry it together to their dwelling.

This presents to the artist the opportunity to observe and develop ideas. Within a foot from where the food is dropped, there are so many activities that could be observed in relation to human life, explaining the fact that members of same species compete regularly to obtain food, living space and other necessities. These situations include tension, struggle and increase in number (multiplicity) which have been noticed as a way nature communicates to man.

The study therefore, is inspired by the fact that the behaviour of ants are sources of idea for creativity and that ceramic art, as one of the most important medium of communication could be used to interpret nature and to explain the fact that when members of same species increase in number with intent to achieve a common goal, there is struggle. The study examines the movements and behaviours of ants as exemplar for ideas that could be used to explain situations in life and intends to use them to create ceramic art pieces that can give a concrete explanation to situations in struggle.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop design concepts from natural movement of ants.
2. To design and produce three large philosophical ceramics pieces from the natural movement of ants.

### **1.4 Studio Practice Questions**

1. In what way(s) can design concepts be developed from movement of ants?
2. How can multiplicity in struggle be represented in a ceramic piece?

### **1.5 Delimitations (Scope of study)**

The study is limited to the study of movement of ants to a target and back to their abode and to interpret these observations in a ceramic piece that is relevant to a philosophical statement “Multiplicity in struggle”. The production technique is limited to hand forming technique and throwing methods.

### **1.6 Importance of the Study**

Successful completion of this project will

1. Redirect students’ attention to philosophical art pieces rather than just decorative works
2. Re-emphasize on the effective understanding of philosophical ceramic art and its effect on the human psyche. This will be communicated through design and production of composite pieces.
3. Broaden observers’ knowledge and understanding on contemporary ceramic wares and their functions.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The study has five chapters. Chapter One gives a general introduction with the background to the study, the statement of motivation, the objectives, studio practice questions, the scope of the study as well as the importance of the study. Chapter Two reviews related literature which includes both empirical and theoretical reviews. Chapter Three also looks at the materials and methods, while Chapter Four gives a detailed account of the results and discussions. Chapter Five deals with summary, conclusions and recommendations.



## **CHAPTER TWO**



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 The Concept of Art

Art is a word which many, including philosophers, critics and educators have found difficult to define. The popular view was, and continues to be that art cannot be defined. Most artist and art educators hold to this view as some people hold to their religion. Art cannot be defined, they say, because the things we have called art do not all have a distinctive feature in common (Donovan, et al 2012). The thought that art cannot be defined is not of course a new one: it was the central claim of several aestheticians in the 1950s (Carroll, 2000). However people have tried to define art through explanations based on their field of study and understanding.

Art can be explained as the implication of theory to practice. The practice, like matter, plays the objective limiting role; theory plays the subjective expanding role. (Savage, 2002). According to Stecker (2010), artworks are to be defined as items that fulfil an evolving set of functions, or as items that are at least intended to do so as if the works in question belong to central art forms. De Bolla (2003) tries to simplify the definition as an object that produces aesthetic experience and further explains that categories of art can only be understood in relation to the prior concept of the “aesthetic”

“artworks” only become visible once one has a fully formed concept of “the aesthetic”. The art object is something designed to provoke certain form of response, a certain type of interaction. The canonical interaction with art involves the aesthetic (however that is to be characterized). So the artwork is an object designed with the function of engendering aesthetic experience, perceptions, attitude, and so forth (Carroll, 2001)

Herwitz et al (2007) on the other hand explained that something is a work of art only when it has meaning, and only if the work embodies the meaning that it has. So meaning

and embodiment are the two necessary, though not quite sufficient, conditions of a work of art. Art is a universal phenomenon, yet at the same time it is culturally specific. We think of something designated as art as a distinct product of skill that fulfills certain culturally derived aesthetic criteria at the same time that answers basic human need. What might be considered as art and what might not, can be properly explained only with the help of participants from the culture itself. While the concept of art is universal, it cannot be defined except it is perceived by those who create and experience it (Feintuch, 2003)

Art is an open concept, a concept denominating a field of activity where originality and inventions are permanent possibilities (Carroll, 1999). Artwork relate to their surroundings in many ways. A number of these relations provide grounds for attributing meanings to the works and our interpretations will vary as we emphasize one relation over other. In general, we can group art theories according to which kind of relation they emphasize. These relations include: relation with the audience, relation with the world they represent, relation with the artist and relation with the culture of origin (Parsons, et al, 1993). If we cannot define art in stable and meaningful terms, then it is not open to anyone to evaluate some objects functionally as art (Fenner, 2003).

## **2.2 The Philosophy of Art**

It is not plausible to suppose that artistic value can simply be identified with a work's cognitive value. The value of art is neither hedonic, aesthetic nor emotive, but cognitive, that is to say, valuable as a source of knowledge (Graham, 2005). To properly appreciate an artwork, one should attend to its form rather than content, where form is conceived as something immediately available to the senses (Stecker, 2010).

Desmond (1986) in the study of Hegel's aesthetics summarizes that the concreteness of the art work presents certain compacted fullness which brings to the fore the following considerations. First, it implicates the idea of dynamic origination. Second, it makes concrete certain process of emergence. Third, it articulates itself into the shape of a certain embodied formation. Finally, bring to light a rich wholeness and concrete universality. It is probable that when our memory records an experience it recognizes also its analogical resemblance to other experiences of a similar kind and 'accepts' it under the heading of a form (Rawson 1984).

Suggestions must be made that art and philosophy work as complementary mode of articulation, one oriented to imaginative concreteness the other to conceptual concreteness (Desmond, 1986). What differentiates an artwork from an indiscernible counterpart and thus from non-artworks in general is "the fact that the artwork uses the way the non-artwork presents its content to make a point about how that content is presented". The work does not simply present its subject, but is significant for the way it presents its subject. Built into the artwork is an intentional structure for which, as with intentional structure in general (Dahlstrom, 2008). However, philosophy of art should not be confused with art history, art criticism, or art appreciation. Generally, philosophy is less an exploration of things than an exploration of our shared conceptual framework for thinking about them. Applying this distinction, one philosophical task is to determine whether there is an underlying logic to what we include and exclude from the category of art (Gracyk, 2012).

Modern art is constantly pushing boundaries of "artistic" seeking and providing new answers and question of what art really is. Not surprisingly, every new movement is accompanied by a theoretical discourse to justify its premises. In the art world, the



permanent drive for renewal has urged more and more artists to turn to philosophy to support their concepts of art. (Braembussche, 2009)

### **2.3 Functions of Ceramics**

Ceramic art has been used in diverse ways for various reasons, for religious, social or ritual purposes both in the past and recent times regardless of how it was conceived by the artist. Ceramics is one of the oldest art practiced by man. Unfortunately, tradition and familiarity often conflict with the realistic appraisal of capability and thus the innovations necessary to fulfil the potentials of art and its further technological expansions are delayed. In a sense, then, the consideration of ceramics as a possible answer to current exacting performance requirement for engineering materials may have been hindered rather than helped by this long tradition. Artefacts made of fired clay are ubiquitous and their functions are diverse. Ceramic bricks, tiles, pipes and other forms of building materials are very common, and tubes, funnels and fittings for other industrial processes take advantage of the refractory properties of fired clay (Orton et al, 1993).

Looking at pottery in museum or as illustrations in books, one can't help but be amazed by the huge and subtle diversity of forms that man has molded clay into, for a wide variety of possible uses. Beyond the natural instincts of enjoying the purely manipulative quality of the material, and the function which is required of the formed objects, ceramics form has been influenced and altered by many factors and forces.

Pottery developed as a response to the needs of mankind. Pots became containers and dispensers – pots of purpose (Hopper, 2000).



In trying to identify, know and eventually understand craft object, it is helpful to begin by examining man-made things generally. One can approach them from any number of categories, including their usefulness and their desirableness (Howard, 2008)

Peek et al, (2004) acknowledges the fact that fired clay objects from Africa take both nonfigurative and figurative forms. Terra-cotta is frequently used to distinguish figurative sculpture from functional vessels, or to distinguish art from craft this distinction corresponds to the predominance of men as sculptors and women as potters. The majority of nonfigurative ceramics in Africa serve the domestic purpose of settled agriculturists. They are used for storing, transporting, cooking and eating a range of foodstuffs and liquids.

Ceramics products have been contributing largely to the improvement of industrial devices for material production, taking advantage of thermal resistance and abrasion resistance (Ceramics Society of Japan 2012). Ceramics have been used for industrial applications due to their unique mechanical, thermal, chemical, electrical, magnetic, optoelectronic, superconducting and gas sensing properties. As such, ceramics have become important for advance technologies such as energy transformation, storage and supply, information technology, transportation systems, medical technology and manufacture technology (Riedel et al, 2011).

There are however, many ceramics which are ceremonial in a strictly religious sense and display their ceremonious nature in their actual forms. (Rawson, 2011). He further explains that objects for use in religious rituals such as jars for storage of ritual objects in the temples (Peru); vases for flowers offerings on Buddhist altars, and wares for shrines (in the Far East); spouted libation ewers (in Ancient Iran, India, Buddhist China and Japan); and large ornate jars in archaic forms as well as small libation cups or jugs

for family altars (in Confucian China). All of these functions may affect the conception of the forms into which a vessel is shaped, and must be taken into accounts as a 'life use' (Rawson, 2011).

Ceramics like other classes of material culture can be studied at a variety of levels: as formal abstractions, as artistic statements and stylistic messages, as chronological markers, and as tools or objects with particular uses. A concern with the use of goods is essential to understanding what humans did in the past, their behaviours and activities. An understanding of the use of goods is also key to examining the broader role of objects in human societies, in expressing social relations, in productive systems, and in political or religious context (Hopper, 2000).

## **2.4 Multiplicity**

Competition is the most fundamental form of social struggle. It is the natural results of the universal struggle for existence. It is based on the fact that all people can never satisfy all their desires. Whenever and wherever commodities which people want are available in a limited supply, there is competition. Competition is a modified struggle. It is a social process in which two or more individuals or groups are striving to achieve some mutually desired goals (Clement, 2010). In nature, plants and animals struggle for survival and this assertion is shared with Williams (2000) who offered that living things compete with each other for scarce resources. Plants compete for light, space, water and nutrients, animals compete for things like food, space and mates. Many animals have to establish a territory if they are to attract a mate or breed.

Competition is a situation in which organisms that live near one another strive to obtain the same limited resources. When organisms use the same limited resources for

survival, they must compete for that resource. Competition among different species of organisms is often greatest between organisms that obtain their food in similar ways. Thus, green plants compete mainly with other green plants, meat-eating animals with other meat eating animals (Alters, 2000). Neighbouring plants affects target plants by intercepting light and moisture above ground and nutrients, space, and moisture below grounds and through the production of allelochemicals (Gibson, 2014)

Animals compete for water, food and space. They also compete for mates and breeding sites. Competition for food is very common. Herbivores eat plants and often different species will eat the same plants. She further explains that carnivores will compete with other members of their own species for the prey as well as members of different species (Fullick, 2001)

People struggle to survive within the horizon of particular psychological or ideological pattern. They struggle to become something psychologically. This striving moulds and expands the struggle for basic necessities. At the social and physical level, people acquire physical necessities, and at another level, they use these for psychological gratification.

People acquire money, things, knowledge etc. as a means to power, prestige, recognition etc. They struggle to attain wealth and positions in society in order to be powerful in various ways (Kaulemu, 2008). Andreski (1968) also gives recognition of the fact that the struggle for wealth, power and prestige (for opheimities, i.e. desirable things of life, as they may be called) is the constant feature of the life of humanity.

Intellectuals should be seen as mixed group some of whom produce ideas, while others translate and modify ideas and still others disseminate and popularize them.



Intellectuals can be ‘radicals’ in the sense that they invent and imagine different ways of organizing and legitimizing social activities. But they can also be politically subservient, helping with the complex process of turning ideas into ideologies, rhetoric, slogans and myths (Wilfred et al, 1996)

## **2.5 Forming Techniques**

Ceramics can be fabricated by a variety of methods, some of which have their origins in early civilization. Like African, ceramics is made with simple technique; the tradition is as old as any in the world, dating back as far as the 18<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. Sánchez, (2012) writes that typical forming techniques in pre-Hispanic and contemporary Mesoamerican are molding, that is pressing plastic clay into or over a mold which is made from clay and fired or from gypsum for durability; coiling, that is building up a vessel with rolls or coils of clay of uniform thickness and pinching that is squeezing clay between the fingers in order to build up walls. Frequently vessels are formed by combination of these methods. Marks on the vessel surface permit us to recognize to some extent the forming methods. Hand forming has been the traditional technique used by artisans and artists to produce ceramics and statues (Fischer, 2009)

Wesler, (1998) offered that the method of forming a pot vary from place to place, but generally speaking, the clay being plastic leaves the potter theoretically at liberty to mold it to whatever shape fancy may suggest. There is generally a distinction between hand forming technique and machine molding technique. A few places maintain distinct individualistic techniques, while others combine aspects of the two.

The forming techniques reflect the technological advances in ceramic production known to the society that produced the ware. Artists may produce handmade pots in



one village, while the machine molding technique is used in the next. The choice may be economic or linked to tradition or aesthetics (Velde, et al 2012).

The potters' wheel was invented for more versatile ceramics forming and is still used today in much the same fashion as originally developed. The technology of the potters' wheel has also evolved to use rotating wheels for highly automated plastic forming of cookware and bone-China as well as some for institutional and electrical porcelain bodies (Rice, 2002). Before slip casting was developed, throwing, jigger and jollying and pressing were the main methods of manufacture. The throwing of pots on a wheel meant the potter dictated the shape of the pot entirely by his hands. Inevitably this meant there was some variation between each piece and so the technique of jigger and jollying was introduced to speed up the operation and allow for repeatable shapes.

Somiya *et al*, (2003) inputs that the current production of ceramics is characterized by the presence of both modern and traditional types of production. Many attempts have been made in recent years to improve *ceramic* processing by new *forming techniques*. Gelcasting as a ceramic forming process offers distinct advantages as an alternative to the more conventional ceramic forming methods such as dry pressing, slip casting and injection molding. The process was developed as a simple and economical method for producing complex-shaped advanced ceramics components. Gelcasting involves the dispersion of ceramics powders in a polymerizable aqueous monomer solution to form fluid, castable slurry which is then gelled in the mold. This gives an exceptionally strong results at the green state (Wachtman, 2009). So the development of ceramics forming technique is unending and more era of technological as well as convenient production styles lie ahead for the production of ceramic wares.

## **2.6 Finishing Techniques**

The finishing in ceramics is the final touch given to ceramic pieces. In some cases, decorations are referred to as finishing. Decorative techniques for ceramics take into account the possibilities offered by the various properties of clay during the process of drying and the effect of firing. On the other hand decoration on ceramics is an index of preferences, influences and social context of potters and users. Ancient decoration might also have a particular intended meaning and a particular function that might be informed by culture (Sánchez, 2012)

Decorative techniques may involve applying colour to a vessel, either to the entire vessel as a slip or glaze, or to portions of it. Other decorative techniques involve altering the body of the vessel itself through a variety of plastic techniques. Techniques that do not involve the application of colour and that can affect the entire surface of the pot include smoothing, burnishing, or polishing (Sinopoli, 1991).

Deetz, (1993) delves into African ceramics finishes and explains that decoration would seem hardly necessary. In African, pottery was produced in certain villages for distribution through trade over wide areas. In this context, decorations would make ceramics a more desirable commodity and serve as an aid in the competition between potters of different villages. African pottery often shows distinctive decorations in different places and at different times, thus allowing us to trace the spread of a particular style from one area to another or development of style through time. African pottery was always unglazed, suitable for cooking over open fire. This helped in making them distinct from the imported ceramics (Nurse, 1985).

Dassow, (2009) also added that the fact that glazes aren't used doesn't make African ceramics unsophisticated, far from it, for much African ceramics is elaborately decorated with impressed or carved texture or intricately painted line designs, any of

which might be obscured by glaze. In fact the surface decoration of African art is much more than an effort to make things prettier-often the purpose of vessel, or the position in the society of the user, is reflected in the decoration of the pot.

In some societies, the finishing of ceramics has a link to the culture and beliefs. In the women tradition of ceramics in Raquira (Columbia), the hand of the maker is visible and is of pre-Columbian origin. Oxides rather than glazes are of high essence in finishing and decorating the surface of their pots. This is in accordance to the belief that earth from which the materials are derived is feminine (Duncan et al, 1998)

The finishing of ceramics also has great deal with materials that are used in producing them. Goffer, (2007) also wrote that the origin and colour of clay affect the finish of ceramic wares. Primary clay, for example kaolin, is colourless and when such clay is heated to a high temperature, it produces white ceramic materials. Most potteries however take their colours from primary clays: iron ions (in iron oxides), for example tend to make pottery yellow, brown or red and manganese ions (in pyrolusite, a mineral composed of manganese oxide) make it either dark or black.

Potters made stoneware objects with finely detailed bas-relief designs. This technology suited the application of baroque and rococo decorations to ceramics. A major step toward finding an equal to porcelain was the perfection of cream-coloured earthenware body and a clear glasslike lead glaze, without lingering iron impurities that would give unwanted tints. Cream-ware was perfected by the 1750s and early dated examples are decorated in the manner similar to tin-glazed earthenware. As decorative techniques evolved, potters used under-glazed colours to create a “tortoiseshell” finish (Krill 2010).



The progress in forming and sintering techniques has made special finishing unnecessary in many product areas. A rapidly growing number of fields however, demand product precision which cannot be met by the pace of development in forming techniques. Thus, the importance of finishing too, is growing (Somiya, 2012)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **3.1 Idea development**

Creation of new forms in ceramics art requires a thorough study of both natural and artificial objects. Ketner (1993) in his book *The Emergence of the African* wrote that true art is the development of the sentiments and principles of the human soul; natural objects being the medium of illustration. Stowel (1979) also agreed to this point and stated that art is the imitation of nature: giving their agreement to the fact that nature plays very important role in creativity. Most artists have made it a common practice to sketch the outlines of natural forms to develop their ideas or sketch and make modification on them or abstract them for their new forms. Others create works from man-made sources or imagine a combination of ideas from both natural and manmade and put them into new forms through sketches. There are some however, who do not make sketches at all but create directly out of available materials.

The study sought to explore the movement of ants and dwell much on sketches that relates to the scenery of ants around food. The idea is not centred on constructing the contours of ants in clay but on effects that can be created out of arrangements of common ceramic forms and objects like bowls, slabs and scratches from soft clay (commonly used as decorations or textures on wares) to depict images on how ants gather around food. With this, images of ants were taken and observed. Plate 3.1 and



3.2 show some of the captured images of ants. There was an observation that sweet foods especially those that contain sugar attract quick attention of ants and a larger number of them as well. Some of them were also observed to move faster than others while others carry more food individually and in groups.



### **The Idea**

**Plate 3.1 Image of ants around food**

**Plate 3.2 Image of ants on sugar**

A thorough study on the images was made and several observations were made. This include increase (multiplicity) in the number of the ants on the food, cluster of ants that are closer to the food that stirs up struggle and tension, space in between the ants that are far from the food and diverse directions of the ants to and fro the food. The observation generated a question “what would happen if the food were a human being or the ants as well as the food were human beings?” This question influenced the concept for the idea development of the project. The image of single ant was also observed to be used as a base for the forms for the pieces.

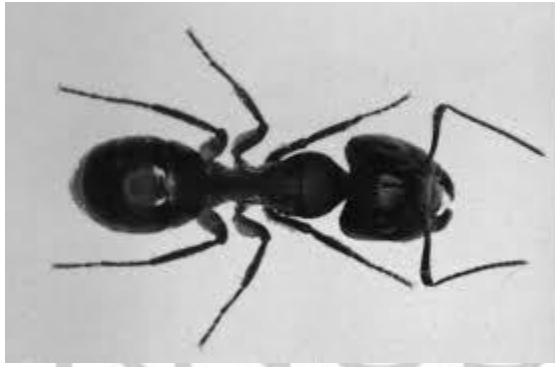


Plate 3.3 Image of an ant

The researcher observed the difficulty in the construction of the ants especially the delicate parts in clay and explored the possibility of representational forms and abstraction. The research considered two main parts of the idea which are the ants and the food (the ants aspire to take) and considers representing the ants with three different small ceramic forms and the food with three larger abstracted human sculptural pieces. The study noticed a link between the situation portrayed in the observation of the ants and the food. This is similar to the quick response of human beings on spotting an answer to their desires. The study identified three main desires common to human lives which they strive for. Human beings strive to obtain food for self and family, struggle to obtain knowledge to be able to understand the world and solve problems and strive to obtain attention and recognition from the people around them. These desires were summarised into three headings for the project which are: 'Struggle for Wealth', 'Struggle for Food' and 'Struggle for Knowledge'

### **3.1.1 Struggle for Food**

Food is one of the important things people pay attention to. The two main parts of the composition were considered in the build-up of the piece; the ants were to be represented by bowls and the food with an abstracted image of a person perceived to be thinking. The images of bowls were taken to be observed for the convenient one to be

used. The shape of the calabash was then considered as the most convenient shape and the outline of it was sketched with the use of the Corel Draw art tool. The image of calabashes were taken and observed as objects of antiquity and historical food container for Africans and therefore considered as a possible option to portray a mental picture on feeding in the African society.



**Plate 3.4 Images of sample bowl shapes**



**Plate 3.5 Selected shape for the bowls for the *Struggle for Food***

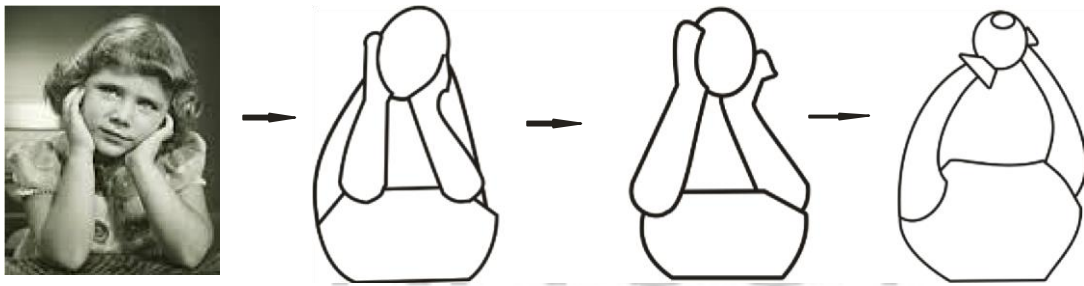
The idea for the construction of the struggle for food was built from the contours of an individual who is perceived to be thinking. Plate 3.7 shows the simplified outlines of the idea built through the use of the Corel Draw programme.

The second part of the piece (the food) considered human postures that suggest worries and picked an appropriate image to create an abstracted figure out of. Plate 3.6 shows some of the images observed.





**Plate 3.6 Images of body postures**



**Plate 3.7 Sequential development of idea**

The two images were then put together for the final images for the struggle for food as evident in plate 3.8.

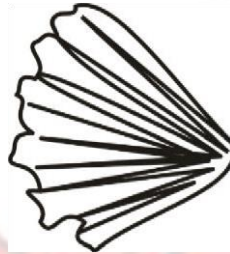


**Plate 3.8 A Representation of The *Struggle for Food***

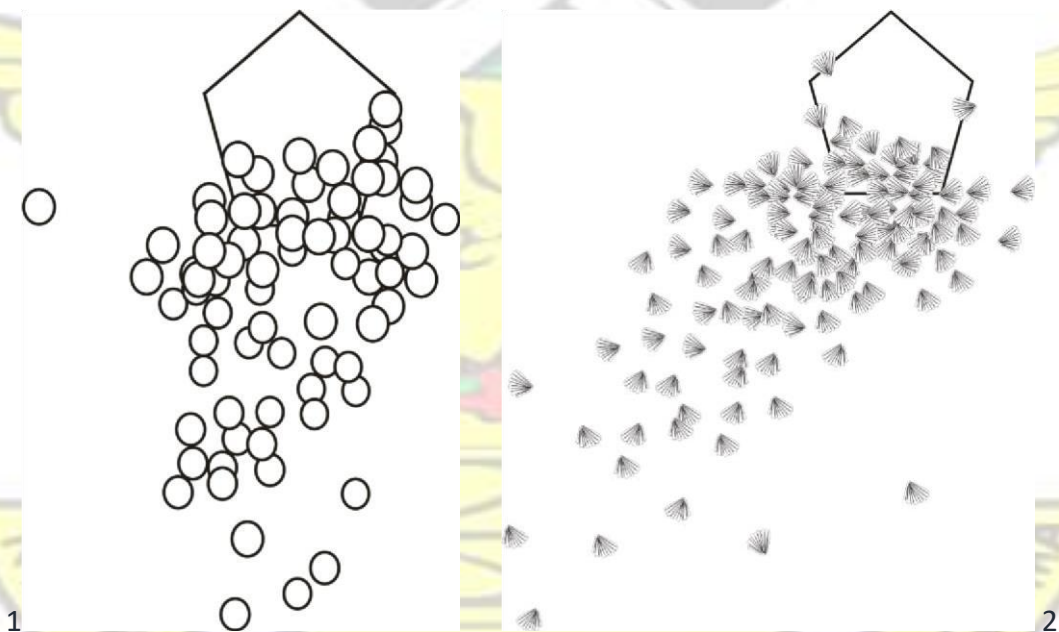
### **3.1.2 Struggle for Knowledge**

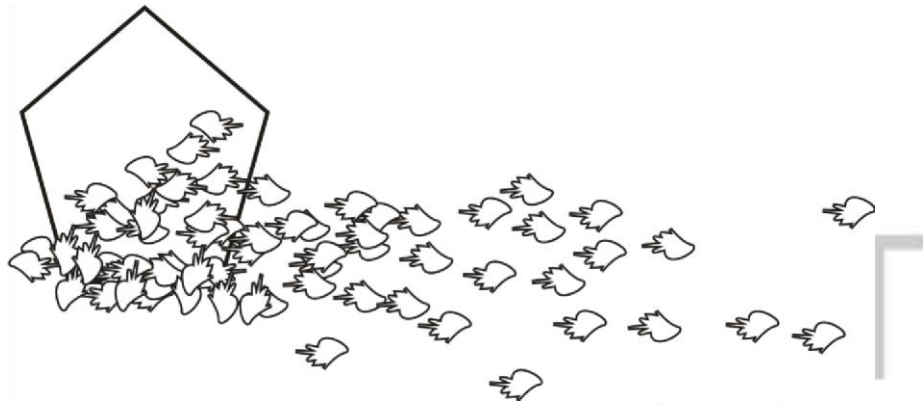
Struggle for knowledge sculptural piece considered several sketches that will give visual impression of ants when perceived from afar. Forms and shapes that are totally different from the contours of the ant were drawn, composed and observed to ensure

the possibility of creating a scene of ants cluster on food. The image on plate 3.9 was however taken as the one that can be reproduced in a larger quantity and can create the desired impression most appropriately. The selected shape was also seen to have the possibility of being reproduced from scratching clay which is different from the normal ceramics production methods.



**Plate 3.9 A Representation of the selected form for Struggle for knowledge**

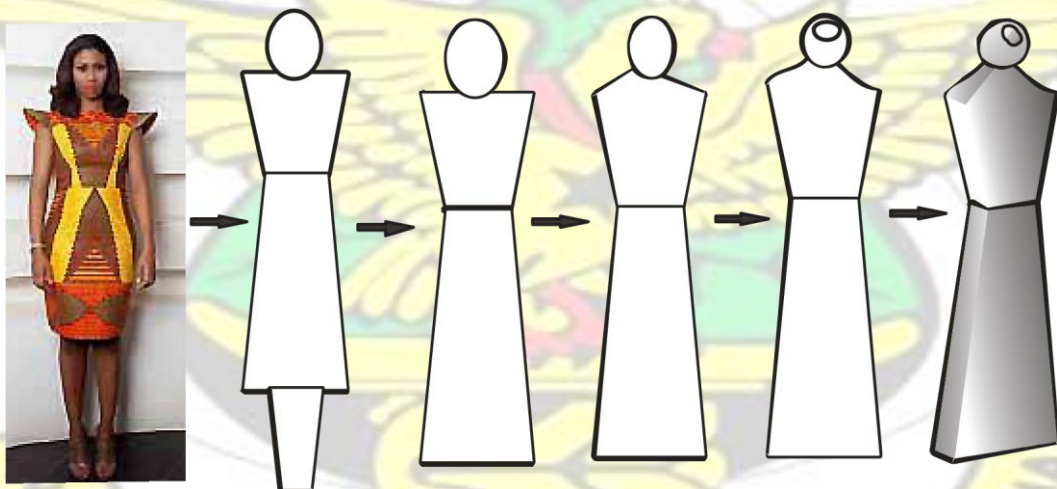




3

### 3.10 The Representation of possible result of forms

The second part of the piece was also created from an erect human figure. The research considered the various geometries of the erect human figure and simplified them into a suitable abstract. The head of the figure was created to have the head as a pot. Plate 3.11 presents the sequential development of the idea.



**Plate 3.1 Development of idea for the Struggle for Knowledge**

The two parts of the piece were then composed together to give a graphical idea on the final design as presented by plate 3.12.



**Plate 3.12 A Representation of *The Struggle for Knowledge***

### **3.1.3 Struggle for Wealth**

Struggle for Wealth was created from abstracted human figure that has a pot as the head.

The ants part of the piece was replaced with small pieces created from the human figure.

The human figure was divided into (the torsos and the head). The head was to be made oval as suggested by the contours of an average human head.

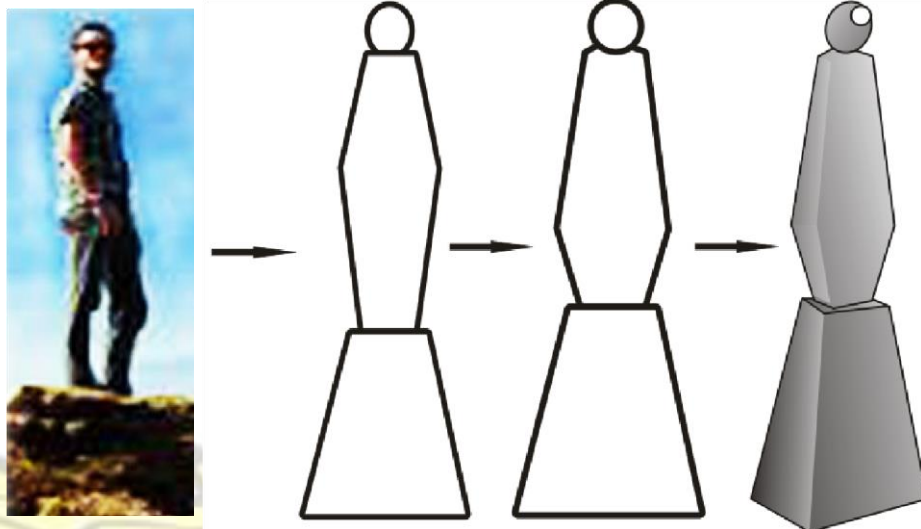




### 3.13 An outline of forms for Struggle for Wealth

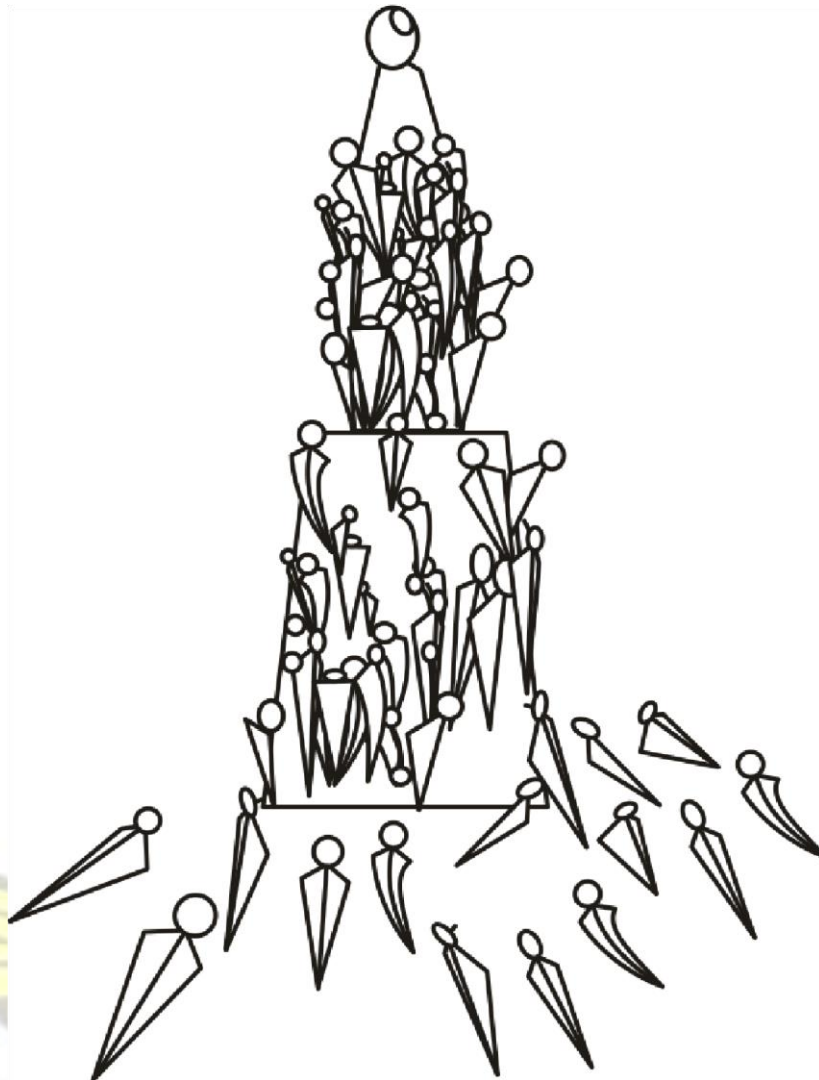
The torso of the human being was also to be replaced with triangular pieces. Some of the torso part of the replaced ant figures were bent and twisted to suggest flexibility.

The second part however, was created from the figure of a human being standing on a mountain.



**Plate 3.14 Development of idea for the *Struggle for Wealth***

The two parts were then composed together to suggest the possible image of the finished work as shown on plate 3.15.



**Plate 3.15: The outline of possible outcome of Struggle for Wealth**

### **3.2 The Inspiration**

Inspiration is something that makes someone desire to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do or create. This may come as a result of one's feelings, experience from the environment or what is perceived around us. Nature makes available colours, textures, shapes and forms for creativity. It is of no doubt that nature inspires creativity.

Ants are natural tiny creatures that pose interesting features for creativity. They are normally perceived to indulge in rapid movement and in groups. Ants from starved

colonies move more slowly and have more direct trajectories than their counterpart coming from fed colonies. On the other hand, the states of the area on which ants move have no direct significant effect on dispersion movement. Ants dispersing in a group move independently and do not coordinate their movements through direct or indirect interactions. However, the geometry of their path changes not only through the effect of random encounters with other workers but also through an active modification of their movement when they perceive directly or indirectly the presence of nearby workers. (Fourcassié, et al 2003).

The artist found an interesting area for study and creativity in the movement of the ants and compared to the life of human beings. A similar situation is observed in human beings at a lorry station especially when a lorry that can take less than the number of person present to board the lorry arrives. In some cases there is a quick movement towards it. Most common of Africans, the rich or a 'perceived' prestigious receives more embraces from the 'poor' and the rich has the tendency of attracting more individuals than the poor. Similar images of the ants are observed at political rally grounds. A lecturer with enough information for student's consumptions most of the time suffers constant request for assistance and demand for explanations to questions from their students. The worthy in the family too suffers perpetual calls to pay for family expenses and cater for education, the poor cleave to the rich to get what they need and people troop to mountains to pray for various answers from God.

It is then agreed with Hoquet, (2015) when he referenced in Darwin's assertion that as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. Human beings

who are poised to possess something to enrich or satisfy their lives have behaviours comparable to the behaviour of the ants when they perceive food. The Holy Bible's direction given to man to learn the ways of the ants was considered as an important statement for creativity.

### **3.3 Preparation of Materials**

#### **3.3.1 Materials Used**

- Mfensi clay: A vitrifiable secondary clay that fires up to 1200°C to a reddishbrown colour
- Grog: Ground or powdered biscuit ware used for controlling shrinkage and improving strength.
- Manganese: Natural earth substance that is applied on ceramic wares to give a dark brown to black colour after firing finish.
- Boracic Glaze: Glaze with borax as its main flux
- Engobe (Red, White, Yellow and Green): Coloured slip applied on wares for colour variations

#### **3.3.2 Equipment Used for Preparation of Materials.**

The following are some of the equipment used in the preparation of the materials.

- Wheel barrow
- Spade
- Pug mill
- Storage box
- Large Table



### 3.3.3 Preparation of Clay for Production

Clay preparation consists of removal of large stones, roots, twigs and polythene, mixing materials and crushing of large particles.

There are four (4) main methods of preparation - the plastic method; the wet method; the dry method and the semi-dry method. However, the plastic method was chosen as the most convenient method for the preparation of materials for production in this project.

The Mfensi clay was used for the production of all three pieces. It was prepared by first ensuring that soluble salt is taken off to make the clay plastic: the clay was left outside for the action of rain and sun (weathering) to take place this process is called ageing. Though technology has given birth to new ways of ageing clay, the traditional method was used. The clay was then soaked in water for two days to enable larger lumps to break up for easy mixing in the pug mill. It was then picked with spade into a wheel barrow and carried to the pug mill to mix into a homogenous mass. The clay was fed in bits into the pug mill and came out in the form of cylindrical bars due to the shape of the die of the pug mill machine as shown in plates 3.16 and 3.16.1. The clay bars were then packed in large box covered with polythene sheet and was well covered. This was to prevent the clay from drying.

There can be a possibility, a desire of the artist or a necessity to blend different types of materials, different clay types (plastic clay with non-plastic clay.), clay with sand, grog, ash, sawdust, etc. the moisture content of the clay mixture may also be adjusted to suit a particular quality, this work made use of raw Mfensi clay with grog as additive to improve the strength and also to control shrinkage of the wares.



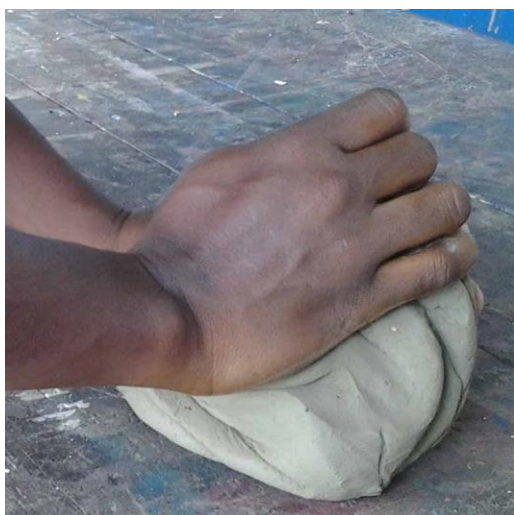
**Plate 3.16 The pug mill machine**



**Plate 3.16.1 Pugged clay bars**

### **3.4 Constructing the Struggle for Food**

The clay was picked from the storage box and grog was added. The spiral method of kneading was employed to further mix the clay as shown in plate 3.17.1. As evident in plate 3.17.2 the cutting wire was also used to wedge the clay to remove air pocket and unwanted materials. It was then pre-shaped into a rectangular block and placed on a sack board. As presented by plate 3.18.1 two guide sticks were placed at the sides and a rolling pin was used to spread the clay evenly till the heights of the guide sticks were attained. The thickness of the slab was determined by the thickness of the guide sticks. Several slabs were rolled and left on a table in the open for three hours for the clay to lose some amount of physically bonded water. Plate 3.18.2 Shows some of the slabs prepared for production.



**Plate 3.17.1 Kneading of clay**



**3.17.2 Wedging of clay**



**Plate 3.18.1 Rolling the slabs**



**Plate 3.18.2 Slabs left in the open to lose water**

An oval shaped was cut out from one of the slabs and left in the open for two additional hours while other slabs were kept in the polythene sheet. The edges of the oval shaped slab were scored and slip applied for joining. Slabs were cut with the width measuring 3 inches. The slabs were joined in bits to form the base of the ware as shown in plate 3.19-1 and 3.19.2.

The process of joining the 3-inch slabs and modelling were continued until the required shape was attained.





**Plate 3.19.1 Joining of slabs**



**Plate 3.19.2 Forming the base**



**Plate 3.20.1**



**Plate 3.20.2**

**Joining slabs to form the base of the Struggle for food**





Plate 3.21.1



Plate 3.21.2

### Shaping the base of the *Struggle for Food*

The slabs were built in the form of abstracted human hands on the formed base. At this point, the work was covered for throwing of bowls to be done.

#### 3.4.1 Throwing of bowls

Well kneaded clay was rolled into a ball and was put on the potters' wheel for throwing to be done. The clay was centred, opened, pulled and shaped on the revolving disc of the potters' wheel to form a bowl. This was repeated until several bowls were made.

They were left overnight to lose some amount of physically bonded water and turning was done afterwards.



**Plate 3.22 Thrown bowls for the Struggle for food**

#### **3.4.2 Joining of bowls to the ware**

The back of the thrown bowls were incised and joining was done by luting and were then cleaned. A pot was also thrown, left to become leather-hard, turned and fixed on top of the work in the form of abstracted head of a human figure. This was continued by luting and attaching of slabs at the sides of the ware which was carved to form folds and drapes. Cleaning was done afterwards. As evident in plate 3.23.3 the green ware was left to dry for bisque firing.





Plate 3.23.1



Plate 3.23.2



Plate 3.23.3

### Joining of parts of the Struggle for food



Plate 3.24 *The Struggle for Food Piece in the Green State*

### 3.5 Constructing the Struggle for Knowledge



**Plate 3.25 The expected outcome of *The Struggle for Knowledge***

Slab building has been a common practice in ceramics methods of production. This was used as the basic forming method with some clay scratches for multiplicity effect. The following procedures were followed in the production of the piece.

#### **3.5.1 Preparation of slabs**

Well kneaded mixture of clay and grog was pre-formed to a rectangular shape and was beaten to pre-form a slab and was placed on a sack board. Guide sticks were placed at side of the clay and the rolling pin was used to spread the clay out for working slabs to be made. Several slabs were produced and were cut into 5 inches width.





**Plate 3.26.1 Rolled slab**



**Plate 3.26.2 3-inch width slab**

### **3.5.2 Building of the Piece**

Leather-hard slab was cut and placed at the edge of a table (1.5cm away from the edge). At an angle of 45°, a knife was used to cut all the edges of the slab. This was done to strengthen the joined parts and also to prevent the possible cracked joints. The edges were then scored and slip was applied for joining.

The base of the piece was formed by building slabs one over the other from the formed leather-hard slab and was left to lose water again to ensure strength of the base.



**Plate 3.27.1**



**Plate 3.27.2**



**Plate 3.27.3**

### **Building the base of the *Struggle for Knowledge***

The base was strengthened by building slabs inside the ware to prevent the top from collapsing. To be able to fire the piece conveniently, the ware was divided into two pieces due to lack of large kiln for firing.



Plate 3.28.1



Plate 3.28.2

### **Formed base for the *Struggle for knowledge***

The work was continued by joining of slabs in bits with the middle part narrowed and the top broaden to suggest the shape of a human figure. The throwing method of production was employed in making a pot. The pot was allowed to lose some amount of water to become leather hard for turning within sixteen (16) hours. The pot was turned and joined to the piece at the top; this was to suggest the head of a human figure. The work was then left to lose some amount of water for the next step to be carried on.





Plate 3.29.1



Plate 3.29.2

### Building the upper part of the Struggle for knowledge

#### 3.5.3 Making the clay scratches

A ball of clay was kneaded and wedged to remove air pockets. It was then held in the hand and a knife was used to scratch out the clay in bits onto a wooden bat. The clay scratches gave the effects of the sea shells as shown in plate 3.30 and 3.30.1.



Plate 3.30.1



Plate 3.30.2

### **Making the clay scratches for the *Struggle for Knowledge***

Several clay scratches were made as shown on plate 3.31 for the production of the piece and were left on a wooden bat for ten hours to become leather hard. The piece was then scored (from the base to top), slip was applied on the scored surface and the clay scratches were joined in bits to the main piece. This was followed by sponging to ensure clean surface. At this stage, the piece was allowed to dry for firing for two weeks. Plate 3.32 shows the image of the clay scratches that have been joined to the main piece and kept uncovered for drying.





**Plate 3.31 Clay scratches**



**Plate 3.32 Joined clay scratches on ‘Struggle for knowledge’**

### **3.6 Construction of Struggle for Wealth**

#### **3.6.1 Construction of the base**

Well kneaded clay was rolled on the sack board with the help of the rolling pin and the guide sticks. The clay was left on a table to become leather-hard. It was then placed at the edge of the table (2cm from the edge) and at an angle of 45°, a knife was used to cut off the clay at the edges of the slab for the base to be constructed. Other prepared slabs were cut for the building of the sides of the base. The slabs were left to become leather-hard and the edges were cut off as was done to the initial slab for the base. The slabs

were then joined together by luting. To ensure strength in the base for it to be able to carry the main ware, slabs were built in the inside of the base. The base was constructed in such a way that the back was angular to enable the work to be able to fix at a corner of a large room and the front constructed to slant with the idea of giving a slope. It was then covered with leather-hard slab and cleaned as shown in plates 3.33.1 and 3.33.2



Plate 3.33.1



Plate 3.33.2

### **Building the base of 'Struggle for Wealth'**

Other slabs were cut for the construction of triangular forms on the base. This was to create an impression of figures climbing onto the top. This was done by cutting clay out of the constructed base so that air will not be trapped in the ware to prevent dunting. Triangular slabs were cut at sides and at an angle of  $45^\circ$ , the edges were cut off. This was to prevent possible cracking during drying and firing. The slanted edges were scored and the slip was applied for joining. Several triangular forms were made and fixed on the base. This was followed by cleaning with sponge. With the exception of the triangular forms, the base was scratched to give a rough texture in order to give an effect of a surface that is easy for climbing.



**Plate 3.34 Constructing the base of ‘Struggle for Wealth’**

Round balls were made from clay and were placed on a wooden bat and kept in an airy dry place for six (6) hours. This was to enable the clay balls to lose some amount of water for scooping. The clay balls were scooped to make them lighter: This was done by cutting the balls into two and scooping tool was used to take clay from the inside. This was followed by scratching of the surface and joining them. They were then cleaned and holes were punched on them to prevent trapping of air that can cause dunting. The clay balls were left uncovered for four hour to become leather-hard. They were then fixed according to the sizes of the triangular figures on the base of the piece (on top of each figure) as shown in plate 3.36 they were then cleaned with sponge and holes were punched with a nail on stick on all the ball to prevent trapping of air in order to prevent dunting.





**Plate 3.35 Prepared clay balls for construction of the Struggle for wealth**





### **Plate 3.36 Joined scooped clay balls on the base**

#### **3.6.2 Construction of the Main Piece**

Leather-hard slabs were cut for the building of the piece. They were placed on a wooden bat for two hours to enable them lose some more water for strength and stability. Slabs that had been cut into different sizes were used to build from the base gradually to the top. Unlike the base, the triangular figures were built together with the main framework. The back of the piece was made to be angular to ensure stability at the joints. The piece was constructed to taper to the top; this was to create an idea of perspective when it is observed from the base.



Plate 3.37.1



Plate 3.37.2

#### **Constructing the struggle for wealth**

A pot was thrown on the potters' wheel and was put on a wooden bat overnight to become leather-hard. It was then turned and the base was scored. Slip was applied on both the base of the pot and the top of the piece and the pot was joined to the top of the main piece. The oval pot fixed on top of the work was to give an idea of an abstracted human head.

Scooped round leather-hard clay balls were made. They were then scored together with the surfaces for them to be fixed and with the use of slip the balls were fixed onto the tops of the triangular abstracted figures on the ware and then cleaned as suggested by plates 3.38.1, 3.38.2 and 3.38.3.

The piece was then cleaned with sponge to make it look neat and holes were punched with a nail on stick at invisible parts and at the base which was to prevent trapping of air that can cause dunting. The green ware was then left uncovered to dry for firing within two weeks.



**Plate 3.38.1**  
balls on *Struggle for Wealth*



**Plate 3.38.2**



**Plate 3.38.3** Fixing clay





**Plate 3.39.1**  
**piece (before and after fixing of clay balls)**

**Plate 3.39.2 The *Struggle for Wealth***

### **3.7.1 Firing and Finishing of the *Struggle for Knowledge***

A ware becomes ceramic after it has gone through firing. There are several clay types and each has a maturing temperature. The type of clay used in this project was Mfensi clay (vitrifiable secondary clay) that matures at a maximum temperature of 1200°C. The *Struggle for knowledge* piece was unassembled after drying and loaded separately into an electric kiln for a bisque firing. It was fired to a temperature of 1100°C within fourteen (14) hours. The kiln was left for a day to cool down before opening when the temperature inside was 220°C, the dumper was opened to an approximate angle of 45° to facilitate rapid cooling. The unassembled pieces were then drawn from the kiln four (4) hours later when the temperature inside the kiln was 110°C. They were further allowed to cool to a temperature of 32°C before reassembling. After assembling the pieces, manganese was mixed with water and applied onto some parts of the body of the ware with brush which was dried and thin application of transparent glaze was done on the top part of the piece with brush. The fired clay scratches were also painted with manganese. This was to bring the colour of the wares closer to the colour of ants. They were then given a thin application of glaze to prevent fungi from growing around the piece when subjected to harsh weather conditions.



Plate 3.40.1



Plate 3.40.2



Plate 3.40.3



**Applying Manganese on the *Struggle for Knowledge***  
**3.7.2 Firing and Finishing of the Struggle for Food**

The Struggle for Food piece was dried for three weeks and packed into an electric kiln for a bisque firing. It was fired to a temperature of 1100°C within fourteen (14) hours. The kiln was allowed to cool for a day before opening when the temperature inside was 188°C. They were then drawn from the kiln four (4) hours later when the temperature inside the kiln was 40°C. The wares were cleaned with water to prevent defects during glost firing. Manganese was applied onto the back of the bowls and were allowed to dry. Afterwards, the inside of the bowls were brush painted with brown glaze and left to dry. The glazes together with the manganese were allowed to dry within 24 hours and were then packed into an electric kiln for glost firing. They were fired to 1100°C within 16 hours. The wares were then drawn from the kiln after it has been cooled to a temperature of 40°C.



**Plate 3.41 Manganese painting of bowls with brush**



**Plate 3.42 Glazed bowls to be fired for *Struggle for Food***



**Plate 3.43 Glaze and Manganese application on *Struggle for Food***

**3.7.3 Drying, Firing and Finishing of the Struggle for Wealth**

The piece 'Struggle for Wealth' was dried for three weeks. They were then packed into an electric kiln and fired up to 1000°C. After which the kiln was cooled to a temperature of 230°C and the door and dumper were opened to facilitate fast cooling. This took four hours for the kiln to cool to a temperature of 39°C. The wares were then drawn from the kiln and were cleaned with water to prevent defects during the second firing. Manganese was mixed with water and a 1 inch brush was used to paint to get antique effects. Different colours of glazes were used to paint the round forms on all the pieces. The wares were then dried for 10 hours and then packed into an electric kiln for glaze firing. They were fired to a temperature of 1100°C and the kiln was given gradual cooling afterwards. The round forms fired to variety of colours due to different glaze bodies applied.



Plate 3.44



Plate 3.44.1



**Plate 3.45.1 Manganese application on the base of *Struggle for Wealth***



**Plate 3.45.2 Manganese application on the *Struggle for Wealth***

## CHAPTER FOUR

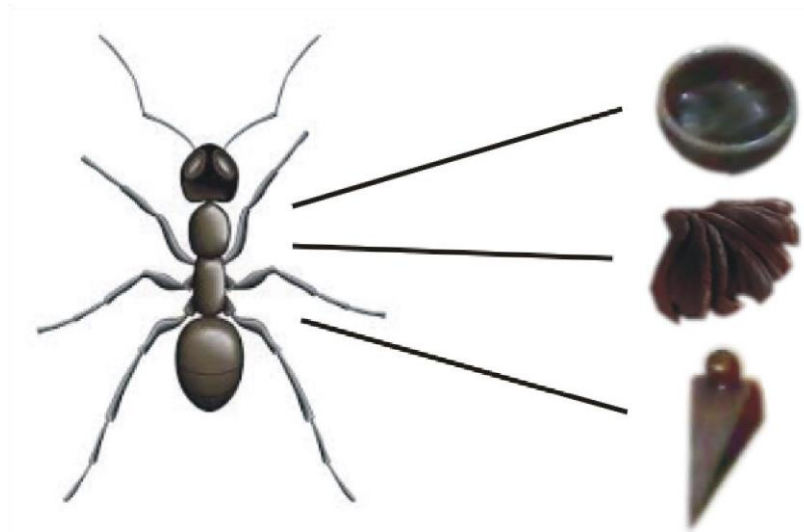
### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Presentation of Pieces

There are almost infinite possibilities for the ways artistic modes can go together to reflect, mould and enhance the social life of human beings. Glimpses of how art forms functioned in social contexts helps us to sense the relevance of such forms, the meaning they have aside from the mere escape from the hard realities of life (Hatcher, 1999). It is agreed with Stecker (2010) as he states in the book *Artworks: Meaning, Definition, Value* that to properly appreciate an artwork, one should attend to its form rather than content, where form is conceived as something immediately available to the senses. Form however, becomes very relevant in consuming what an art piece intends to put across.

The study employed several production methods in the process to come up with three different art pieces on the theme 'Multiplicity in Struggle'. All three forms took inspiration from the behaviour and the movement of ants and linked them to human behaviours. Three main headings were identified for the art pieces: the 'Struggle for Food', 'Struggle for Knowledge' and 'Struggle for Wealth'. The study made use of three different objects to represent food as well as three different objects to represent the ants. Plate 4.1 shows the objects that are used in place of the ants and plate 4.2 showing objects used in place of both the ants and the food on the project. The heads of abstracted human figures of all the three pieces are represented with pots. Pots are known to serve the function of storing food (solid and liquid). In effect, it serves the purpose of keeping items meant for both present and the future. The human head on the

other hand is known to serve the purpose of storing information and keeping thoughts. The pot therefore was identified as the appropriate representation of a head.



**Plate 4.1 Ant and objects that represent it in the project**





## **Plate 4.2 objects and their representations**

### **4.1.1 Struggle for Food**

The Struggle for food piece is developed from the ant concept. It was built using the slab, modelling and the throwing methods of production, was fired to 1000°C at the bisque state and was finished with bens-umber colour glaze and manganese at a temperature of 1100°C. Plate 4.3 shows the image of the finished product. The form of the bowls used in the piece is taken from the shape of calabash. The calabash was used in the indigenous African society to serve drinks and food. Its usage in the study stems and links it to antiquity and history. The calabash was used originally, as a food holder or to make musical instruments. In the modern setting, the African calabashes are used as home decorations. They are still upheld as important; some traditional eating places entertain tourists by serving them native recipes in calabashes. Bowls were arranged around an abstracted sculptural figure made in the form of a woman supporting the head on the arm: this posture is normally found among people with problems in most African societies. The head of the figure is also represented with a pot. Pots are used by the indigenous African for many purposes which include storage of water and keeping of precious jewellery. Pot was used to represent and signify the storage place of thoughts in human life.



**Plate 4.3** *The Struggle for Food*, electric glost fired (1100°C), contemporary ceramic ware, white slip, manganese and glaze finished. Piece produced by David Aboagye

#### **4.1.2 Struggle for Knowledge**

The Struggle for Knowledge piece is a multi-sectional sculptural piece which has its primary concept linked to the quest of individuals to acquire knowledge. The struggle for knowledge shows an abstracted human form in an erect position with the head represented by a pot: the pot is tilted; looking as if something is being poured out: what is being poured out is unknown. The whole body of the figure is engulfed by clay scratches fired and finished with glaze and manganese to depict the colour of ants. From afar, the piece is perceived to look like a human body (as if rotten) invaded by ants. For easy movement and handling, the piece can be dismantled, messed-up, re-hashed, and re-configured, but never without considering context. The invaded objects (clay scratches) seem to move towards the direction of the pot (head) as evident in plate 4.4.



**Plate 4.4:** *The Struggle for Knowledge*, electric glost fired (1100°C), contemporary ceramic ware, manganese and glaze finished. Piece produced by David Aboagye

#### **4.1.3 Struggle for Wealth**

The struggle for Wealth piece is also a multi-sectional sculpture. The top part represents the head of a human being and it is shown by a thrown pot. It is carved to have clustered figures to suggest tension. Round forms used to represent heads and individual



differences are glazed in different colours. The middle part of the piece is made up of the stand which is engulfed by similar objects on the top. The objects seem to open up to suggest a little bit of freedom when compared to the top. The third part is made up of individual objects spread out on the floor. Their movement and directions suggest that they seek to climb to the top of the main piece as shown in plate 4.5.



**Plate 4.5: *The Struggle for Wealth*, electric glost fired (1100°C), contemporary ceramic ware, manganese and glaze finished. Piece produced by David Aboagye.**  
**4.2 Evaluation of Pieces**

The idea people have on ceramics production has developed tremendously over the years. This has always affected the intentions and the creativity of the ceramic artist for productions. In the indigenous society, ceramics art forms and for that matter, pots were made primarily for storage of water, oil, precious jewelleries and for cooking and bowl

for serving food and in some cases, some objects made for decorations. Ceramics art therefore, did not require much emphasis on their forms but concentrated on oval shapes. The understating of their function had a greater influence on what ceramics was. Philosophers, critics, as well as educators defined ceramics based on the purposes for which they were to serve. In this contemporary ceramics era, forms as well as functions have developed beyond simple definitions as the thought behind ceramics productions has gone through tremendous changes. In this era of contemporary art movement, there is a shift in product designing and so the production of ceramics must elude monotonous shapes and comply with the status quo (Okai, 2012).

In this project, the artist permitted criticism, appreciation and analysis from nonartists, professional ceramicists and other artists in all levels of the production process. The information collected revealed that critical study of the behaviour of living things was made to identify the link between human and other creatures and this was used in developing forms for the struggle for wealth, Struggle for food and the Struggle for knowledge while others also felt that space puts limitations on their functions: that their sizes are too large to permit their usage in smaller rooms. Their aesthetic appeal as well as their philosophical connotations however, was welcomed by most of the critics since they felt and noticed a fitting direction of the ceramic art on seeing how simple art forms and decorations have been put together for different ideological expressions. The development of forms out of natural objects and human activities are means of bridging the gap between ceramic sculpture and decorative ceramic pots. It is again agreed with Okai (2012) when he stated that it is a means that seeks to capture reality and meaning into the artistry of ceramics production and therefore makes it vital for the product to fit into modern means of production. It could be consumed in the art world as opposition to the norm and going contrary to the known but with time observers will come to know

the essence of modern art and realise that the subject goes beyond the essence of line, colour, shape, rhythm, texture and harmony.

The thought of the artist to produce ceramic pieces to arrive at the theme employed the imitation of ants in their natural forms but noticed that the time for their production could be too much for philosophical pieces and also puts limitations on creativity. Another attempt sought to use multiple lines and incisions on pots to show the idea of struggle. Though this idea was bought by many artists and critics who observed, the base line to put a limit to their creative appeal was that “they are still the known pots” the only differences lying in the intricate lines made on them. This brought to the fore the realization that the production of ceramics has gone beyond single form and piece. The perception of people on the usage of ceramics has also grown to a level that demands more than pots for storage of precious goods. This also developed the understanding of the artist to a point that the difficulty or the easiness of an observer to identify the philosophical target of an artwork lies primarily on the difference between what exists and what has been produced. The questions “why this”, “why that”, “how was this made”, “what is that” etc. are very important in identifying the philosophy behind production of artworks. They are also the questions that stir up discussions in the minds of observers of an artwork.

Living creatures like animals and human beings though may be born to one person and even as twins; they will possess and exhibit different qualities and also behave differently. This is so expressed in the repetition of forms in different situations in all the three pieces produced.

The artist comes to the realization of the fact that repetition of forms in other words multiplicity of forms can create and bring to the fore the idea of individual differences.

The multiple productions of bowls for the struggle for food in this project makes a



difference from the existed. The known functions of bowls in this regard are not to serve food but to express an idea of feeding. It was amazing to an observer that clay scratches have been able to break the reliance on real objects in creating effects relating to real lives and perception of living things. The clay scratches as well create a sense of realism in the form of the lives of ants. The struggle for knowledge however, sinks an image of reality of life through a simple use of geometric shapes and dances itself to the essence of the cubic style in the contemporary arts.

### **4.3 Philosophical Ceramics (Appreciation and Criticism of Multiplicity in Struggle Ceramic Pieces)**

#### **4.3.1 The struggle for Food**

We take our position seriously. We think through objects and discuss them in their manifold expressions, appreciate the subversive qualities inherent to them and strategize their position in the art world. We understand that no object is an island the crucial question is that of context: how and where do we place these objects; with what movements and why? A systematic approach highlights the importance of each step as well as the interconnection between the various steps in the overall execution of the work. Critic remarked that greater effort, skill and time were employed in the execution of the pieces and the evidence is manifested in the contours of the form.

The Struggle for Food is a piece that required a great effort, skill, determination, charisma, hard work and interest. The level of intelligence as well as skills of the artist was tested by the various processes, skills and techniques required in producing the various parts of the pieces. This called for a greater deal with time and strength which is a pre-requisite for ingenuity. Okai 2012 writes that time as a factor plays a vital role in pursuing great adventures and thus we are cautioned by the worker ant to exercise

steadfastness in our chosen profession and as artists, great change deserves the outmost of time.

In the view of the writer, contemporary ceramics wares may take couple of days to get them done and the duration set will worth the results. It is of high indulgence that the construction of philosophical ceramics ware could take a dimension whereby many can attend to the call and exhibit a sense of great craftsmanship to help eliminate the monotony in their production. We perceive our works of art with our six senses. Art function as creative and informational signals to the brain and communicates to the various parts of the body. However, each one of us experiences artworks differently because our senses can be different even if slightly and due to our beliefs, knowledge, skills and intellectual levels, the way each of us perceives and understands art and their relevance to everyday lives is also different. This accounts for diverse views and comments altered by both critics and appreciators. The visual sense dictates same information but the knowledge on a subject matter and experience redirects our perception and accounts for different views and comments. Many Artists can also see beyond our visible spectrum, analyze a larger range of artworks and have a much better judgment or appreciation of especially works that rely much on their philosophies rather than aesthetics.

The struggle for food piece shows an abstracted image of a mother sharing food to her family. The posture suggests a moment of difficulty and struggle. However, it can be noticed that often in the quest to achieve or to get the satisfaction of life both the struggler and the helper suffer. The mother who serves the food goes through periods of struggles to ensure that every individual is served. The inadequacy of the food to serve the demand does not only send tension and moments of confusion to the

strugglers but also to the bread winner.

#### **4.3.2 The Struggle for Knowledge**

It is of no doubt that every art work has a philosophy or information to give to the viewer but the laudable position is what the artwork seeks to satisfy be it aesthetic, cognitive or emotive. Graham, (2005) states that the value of art is neither hedonic, aesthetic, nor emotive, but cognitive, that is to say, valuable as a source of knowledge. Whether a work of art seeks to satisfy pleasure emotion or aesthetics, its most important aspect is the ability to appeal to the senses of the viewer. Every art is apprehended by its specific ergo, thus making use of a verb that has become a technical term through the stoic theory of knowledge (Vogt, 2007).

The Struggle for knowledge exposition to both artists and non-artists revealed high level of cognitive renditions. Knowledge is the end result of education that can be acquired through information given by the environment, study and experience. To the question whether people struggle for knowledge and that art work could express and buttress a fact that indeed there is a continue phenomenon in human that the acquisition of knowledge is unending and does not also guarantee individual's

satisfaction was to be identified by viewers.

Abstract art uses a visual language of shape, form, colour and line to create a composition which may exist with a degree of independence from visual references (Wikipedia, March 2015). Though the piece presents to the viewer the abstracted image of ants moving to a target for food its central focus is on the logic of perspective and an attempt to reproduce an illusion of visible reality.



It so happens in human life that individuals seem to seek knowledge so much in life that they do not consider the effect on others. When an individual is poised to achieve something, the adverse effect on others becomes unimportant. What lies on top of achieving the highest level of education, remains a mystery to everyone. Does the highest level of education or achieving knowledge offer satisfaction in human life? This is a question to be answered by all. This is evident in the piece when an observer cannot tell what is in the pot that attracts the attention of the individual objects.

Ants in their natural lives are perceived to move quickly to food and their number too increases as more of them perceive the food. The grounds on which the ants travel are of no importance to them, whether their numbers will be satisfied by the food they seek remains unknown. Ants can see, but not very well. They mainly communicate with scent and touch. They have complicated chemical signals that allow them to work together on different tasks. They often spread information by touching each other's antennae or head and as they increase the tendency of hitting against each other becomes high.

Comparable to human life, Individuals quest to achieve higher heights is not devoid of going true tasks that do not perceive the end results clearly. The struggle to acquire education in present times is enormous; increase in population is also affecting quality education. The observation of 'jam' at various educational facilities that account for pressure on infrastructure is not an exception. The artist also remarks that though the center stages of this project is focused on ants, the food they feed on to a large extent contribute to the discussions and must be given attention. This assertion and part of the artwork as well can be likened to the experts and educators who offer the knowledge to students. The question is, are they free from struggles? It is obvious to understand that

the head from which students feed from suffers continuous struggle to acquire knowledge through research to be able to inform effective teaching.

A textile artist (Emmanuel Agyapong) on his contribution to the discussion of the piece made a statement “The one who does not know the struggle of life is either an immature soul, or a soul who has risen above the life of this world. The object of a human being in this world is to attain the perfection of humanity, and therefore it is necessary that man should go through what we call the struggle of life. The piece collectively renders a mental picture of struggle of individual smaller pieces to the single larger piece for something unknown to the viewer. This suggests the appropriateness of the theme on the piece.

Because life means a continual battle, one’s success, failure, happiness, or unhappiness mostly depends upon one’s knowledge of this battle. Whatever be one’s occupation in life, whatever be one’s knowledge, if one lacks the knowledge of the battle of life one lacks the most important knowledge of all.

As soon as a man loses the courage to go through the struggle of life, the burden of the whole world falls on his head. But he who goes on struggling through life, he alone makes his way (Khan, 2012). This is perceived through the use of movement in the individual objects and their link with the main piece.

One must study the nature of life, one must understand the psychology of this struggle. In order to understand struggle one must see that there are three sides to it: struggle with oneself, struggle with others, and struggle with circumstances. One person may be capable of struggling with himself, but that is not sufficient. Another is able to struggle with others, but even that is not sufficient. A third person may answer the demands of

circumstance, but this is not enough either; what is needed is that all three should be studied and learnt, and one must be able to manage the struggle in all three directions. These are also observed with ants when they sometimes move individually to fetch food and take to their abodes individually. Others also move individually but have to take food in groups when they observe that the food is too heavy for individuals to carry. This is made evident in parts of the piece where fired clay scratches are clustered to create an idea of tension and inter-dependence.

Is it certain that man can achieve the objectives set for life's satisfaction without struggles? An analytical observation by critics left questions in the mystery of life, an unending discussion and unanswered question. When an art work refers to something beyond itself, there may be difficulty in determining what it refers to and if, as Goodman holds, every artwork is a character (or class of characters) in a symbol system, there may be difficulties in determining which character it is and whether it does refer to something. Roughly speaking, the critic's guidance in such matters may be called 'interpretation'. And once the art work has been analysed and satisfactorily interpreted, the questions may arise (Elgin, 1997).

#### **4.3.3 Struggle for Wealth**

Ceramic art's ability to appear like other creative products we know through our senses provides opportunity to communicate everything from narrative social commentary to universal truths. Even a simple ceramic pot can, through modifications which relates to or denies the form it is on, communicate ideas beyond itself. Artists should understand the many ways their work can have significant meaning. Artists in ceramics need to understand the rich legacy historical ceramics offers as well as contemporary issues faced by artists working in clay. Philosophical ceramics artwork has its central



ideologies built on the basis of its response to questions raised by nature. A ceramist, Fredrick Okai identified a rhythmic flow of texture and unity within the visible and mentioned that the struggle for wealth clearly shows the abstraction of figures and also employs the cubic style. From this observation it is clear that the representation of nature in an idea development does not necessarily mean a mark of the exact representation. Philosophical art offers the approach to style based on the artist's or the individual's discovery of the medium, and the variety of formal and structural possibilities within the discipline. Beginning with the foundations of building with clay, the basic construction techniques in the traditional and historical forming methods became relevant and well utilized in the execution of the piece. This provided the base needed to move to diverse processes and finishing, and an appreciation for the piece at the historical and contemporary level. The approach in the construction of the piece provides an edge and knowledge as a stepping stone to the next project, and future work.

We acknowledge the deep essence of ceramics and intelligently use its position currently and historically to engage with the art world. The fact that ceramics still holds a firm and important position in the art world of today natural or synthetic is one of its great strengths and promises. This develops to a large extent and increases its contributions and ability to sink deep into the human psyche. We utilize and make the most of this potential; the availability of ceramic material coupled with its wideranging history to the artist is fertile ground from which we can answer the questions worth considering.

The *Struggle for Wealth* presents a graphical image of crawling individuals forging to achieve greater heights. Its strength in dancing to the music of high analytical discussion is buried in the symbolism of geometrically drafted forms: Heads are represented with

circles and the bodies represented with triangular cone forms. Hauser-Schäublin, (1994), wrote that by means of the triangle, fundamental values associated with gender, men and women, skull and vulva, killing/death/ the creation of ancestors and women's sexuality, and women as in-marrying wives, as well as the generation of life, become expressed simultaneously, depending on the orientation of the triangle. Thus, what might be called dualism is in fact complementarity contained and united in a single form. Circles commonly represent unity, wholeness, and infinity. Without beginning or end, without sides or corners, the circle is also associated with the number one to represent individualism in this project. In some cases, there is a distinction between that which is contained within the circle and that which lies without.

Their individual differences are made evident in the sizes of forms and colours of the round representational heads which are made distinct by the application of glazes. The movement of crawling individual figures towards the central figure also denotes their dependency and struggle to achieve the unknown.

The rich history of ceramics is the departmental backbone. We work from this position, question it and build upon it. We do so without limiting the discourse to a question of ceramics exclusively; often the work and conversation directs us into areas beyond the material-specificity of clay and directs much attention to what the visible transmit to the brain for detailed consumption and scrutiny.

This shows that our consciousness is involved in creating our reality. If there is no one to observe reality, every artwork will simply be in some kind of a demand from a space for decoration, and a symbol with infinite possibilities.

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The logo of Kenya National University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is centered in the background. It features a yellow eagle with its wings spread, perched on a green shield. Above the eagle is a black mortar and pestle with a red flame rising from it. Below the eagle is a yellow banner with the Swahili motto 'WISDOM BEGETS NO RIVALRY' in black capital letters.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

The primary objective of this project was to develop design concepts from natural movement of ants and use them in producing ceramic art pieces. This however, was creatively and skilfully manifested in the generation of three philosophically centred project pieces *Struggle for Knowledge, Struggle for Wealth and the Struggle for Food*. All three pieces were developed from the movement of ants to food. However each of the concepts was created out of a situation in human life. The struggle for knowledge was developed from a fact in life that people struggle to acquire knowledge and to also



establish that those who acquire knowledge as well as those who provide knowledge struggle in life: As long as the number of individual strugglers increase, the struggle in individual lives also multiply.

The project also delved into exploration of alternate means of producing large sculptural pieces through assemblage. It also explored the possibility of pieces having the ability to be dismantled, messed-up, re-hashed, and re-configured, without effect and limitations on their usage and significance. Making large size sculpture was made a possibility and efficient even when the size of the kiln was smaller with respect to the piece to be produced. The project also made use of smaller clay scratches that are put together to form a large piece.

The *struggle for Wealth* piece also combined the movement of ants and idea from image of individual person's ascension to mountains to prayer for their needs. In order to break the monotony in the usage of natural forms in ceramics, human figures were simplified. In this regard geometrical forms replaced the natural human forms in nature. As evident in this project, the artist, in the *Struggle for Wealth* combined various shapes in achieving its form. They included triangles, squares, rectangles, circles and semi-circles.

The *struggle for Food* however, broke the boundary of the conventional function of bowls. In this research, the primary functions of bowls in the African society that have been to serve food to both the living and the dead as well as deities was made to serve a different function that is to communicate idea of feeding in the local family. The function of pot as well was made to function as a representational form of the human head that absorbs and contain the information and struggles in human life.

Hitherto, this project has delved into the system of producing large sculptural ceramics pieces adapting the multiples of sections to formulate single pieces. As a result this

technique, the researcher was able to produce three varied pieces using the multi-sectional approach and the pieces were: the *Struggle for Knowledge*, the *Struggle for Wealth* and the *Struggle for Food*.

The pieces are built on the basis of the fact that representational art or figurative art, references objects, or events in the real world. Most ceramic sculptural pieces are characterised by monotony of building of forms from the contours of natural objects and forming sculptures in single units. It was the objective of the researcher to break the boundary by using repetition of similar forms.

The study lays emphasis on the effective understanding of functions of ceramics pieces and diverse ways by which creative ceramics sculptures can function and communicate. The study also focused on the means of eluding the conventional perception of ceramics art forms by educating on the philosophical relevance and relationship to the human being. The study builds itself to the relevance of ceramics art forms in art therapy thus explaining situations in life and visualizing philosophical statements. It also broadens the knowledge about sculptures in contemporary practices. Ants in their natural habitat were studied and linked to human lives to create ceramics art pieces and the repetition and multiplicity of forms approach in constructing huge pieces provided style and diversity. It will therefore not be a diversion from the fact on the part of the researcher that the findings will be useful for educational purposes.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The artist agrees to a larger extent that nature has been the foundation of creativity and will remain as such. In as much as the artist continues to explore the environment in creativity, it becomes unending that the environment still has a lot to offer the artist.

Both the lettered and the unlettered will continue to understand the relevance of ceramics in psychology when they are able to link the artworks to what exist in nature and in human life. The highlights of the philosophical quotations in ceramics could as well be told outside the artist world through the linkage of what exist between creatures. Findings obtained from discussions of the art pieces revealed the lack of knowledge about functions of ceramics apart from its decorative and domestic relevance. This was evident when teachers of other fields apart from the arts seemed to be confused on the issue of ‘every art piece has philosophical background’ and the fact that ‘artworks have functions that go beyond their uses in the home’. Some however, agreed that ceramics can be used to analyse and interpret cultural information. In an encounter with some critics and ceramics artists, it is very difficult to create different concepts and also provide different forms from one source (movement of ants) for philosophical purposes since its development and production require extra effort in their creative processes. Time as a factor puts limits on the development of new forms.

The project however, affirms and concludes that we now live in a very dynamic world, where new and emerging technologies and creative approach to ceramics arts are expanding and challenging artistic practice. Whilst harnessing the rich history of ceramics, our creative abilities provide the opportunity to re-organize in order to redefine the role as well as the function of art in today's society.

The research however, has been able to re-emphasize the relevance of representational art in explaining nature and situations in life which has in effect broadened the observers’ knowledge and understanding on contemporary ceramic wares and their functions. The new approach to ceramics production therefore, must not be seen as a deviation from the norm but a new era of creativity.



### 5.3 Recommendations

Out of the Project findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made for future creative ceramics artworks:

Ceramics students as well as studio potters should perceive the environment as having ideas available to the artist beyond the contours of creatures such as shell, animals, trees etc. The natural environment is endowed with wonderful forms, movements and patterns and the attention must not be directed to only the forms. The ants in addition to their movements have other characteristics that the artist can draw inspiration from. This includes their ability to carry loads that are heavier than their weight and bigger than their sizes. The essence of bridging the gap between the philosophies of ceramics art and the objectives of a decorative ceramics and sculpture must take a centre stage in future projects. This will help to re-emphasize on the effective understanding of philosophical ceramic art and its effect on the human psyche and will help students and potters also to capture the essence in producing outstanding forms for their pieces. Time should not be a hindrance to ceramicists in their creative endeavours but open up a more sophisticated avenue for solving delicate problems confronting mankind. In the quest to pursuing intricate forms from nature and exploring the opportunities nature presents as creative sources, we may be caught in the realms of consuming time but it will worth on the end product.

Our creative endeavours should not be restricted by complexity in methods of production, body and glaze compositions. In the absence of glazes, manganese can also be used as a pleasing finish to ceramics. In cases where there is a limitation to quantity and application of glaze or manganese, both can be used. Both the traditional potter and studio ceramicists can use available simple finishes and also use a combination of some to enhance decorative appearances.

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